

VZCZCXRO9094  
RR RUEHBI RUEHCI  
DE RUEHCI #0100 0791212  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 191212Z MAR 08  
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1936  
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1815  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0844  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0839  
RUEHK/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0571  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2364

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000100

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT PLS PASS HHS, CDC, USAID AND APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: LATEST ROUND OF W. BENGAL AI OUTBREAK SPREADS TO MALDA

REF: KOLKATA 84

**¶1.** (U) SUMMARY: On March 18, the presence of H5N1 virus was confirmed in a state-owned large poultry farm in West Bengal's Malda town. Culling and disinfection of the farm has started along with human health surveillance. The West Bengal Animal Resource Department Minister admitted that his department cannot prevent sporadic H5N1 outbreaks. END SUMMARY

**¶2.** (U) On March 18 evening, the West Bengal government (GOWB) received confirmation from Bhopal's High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL) about the presence of H5N1 virus in dead poultry from a farm in Malda town. Over the past few days, about 1,500 poultry died in the farm which is owned and operated by the GOWB Animal Resources Department (ARD). ARD official N.K. Shit told the media that the farm has been sealed and that culling of 3,000 chickens and 13,000 chicks had started.

**¶3.** (U) A senior GOWB official monitoring the state's avian influenza situation told post that active surveillance of human health was in place both in Malda and Murshidabad districts that reported the second round of H5N1 outbreak in March (reftel). Passive surveillance is in place in areas that reported AI outbreak in January. Such surveillance will be in place till the middle of April.

**¶4.** (U) The latest AI outbreaks in West Bengal have come under legislative scrutiny. At the request of the State Assembly, ARD Minister Anisur Rahman briefed legislators about steps his department has taken to combat the H5N1 spread. Media reports quoted Rahman telling lawmakers that there was "no way" the ARD department could stop sporadic AI outbreaks.

JARDINE